



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

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Hillsdale College Honors Alumni at Homecoming Banquet

Notable graduates to be recognized for achievement and service at 66th Annual Awards Banquet

Hillsdale, Mich. – Hillsdale College will host its 66th Annual Awards Banquet on Sept. 29, when several outstanding Hillsdale graduates will be presented with distinguished alumni awards by their alma mater.

“Our alumni don’t do their amazing work for an award like this, but the chance to honor their achievements and spirit of service at this banquet is something we look forward to each year,” said Grigor Hasted, director of alumni relations at Hillsdale College. “The 2017 award recipients are excellent examples of what we hope a Hillsdale education calls forth in all of our students.”

The College’s annual banquet gathers Hillsdale alumni and supporters during homecoming as notable graduates are given awards recognizing their professional achievement and philanthropic service to Hillsdale. This year’s honorees include:

James Duane Taylor, Class of 1955

Duane is a former CEO of Recreation Creations and a longtime employee of Consumer’s Energy Power Company. Additionally, he served with the U.S. Army from 1955-1957, including a tour in Korea, and held leadership roles on the Hillsdale Community School Board, Key Opportunities Board, and Alpha Tau Omega Alumni Board. Duane participates in the Junior Chamber of Commerce, serves at the First Presbyterian Church of Hillsdale and is also a member of the College’s President’s Club.

Duane completed a bachelor’s degree in business at Hillsdale College in 1955 and in 1961 earned his MBA from Western Michigan University. A Michigan native, Duane is married to fellow Hillsdale alum Beverly Casper Taylor. They have three children: Leslie, Melissa and Matt. Matt is also graduate of Hillsdale College. The Taylors fund an endowed Men’s Basketball scholarship.

Beverly Casper Taylor, Class of 1956

Bev is a former teacher for the Litchfield Schools of Michigan, where she worked for 15 years after teaching elementary school in St. Clair Shores Schools and Portage Schools of Michigan. Outside of her teaching career, Bev served her community as a former president of the Hillsdale Garden Club, where she received the State Garden Club Life Member Award for her contributions; as president of the Chi Omega Alumni Group, Rho Gamma Chapter; and through participation in the First Presbyterian Church and the Hillsdale Woman’s Club. Bev continues to support her alma mater as an active member of the Hillsdale College Board of Women Commissioners and as a member of the President’s Club.

She earned a degree from Hillsdale College in early childhood education in 1956, and later earned her master's degree in education from Western Michigan University in 1962. Originally from Chicago, Bev is married to fellow Hillsdale alum James Duane Taylor, and the two have three children, Leslie, Melissa and Matt. Matt also graduated from Hillsdale College in 1992.

Ruta Sepetys, Class of 1990

Ruta Sepetys is an internationally acclaimed author of historical fiction. Three of her novels, *Between Shades of Gray*, *Out of the Easy*, and her most recent, *Salt to the Sea*, are all *New York Times* bestsellers and international bestsellers. Her work has been recognized for more than 40 book prizes, is featured on more than 20 state reading lists and is in development for film and television. Notable recognitions include both a Carnegie Medal and the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Resident Fellowship for *Salt to the Sea*, as well as the Cross of the Knight of the Order by the president of Lithuania in recognition of her education and memory preservation work. Before writing her first novel, Ruta worked in the music industry for 20 years as an artists' agent.

At Hillsdale College, Ruta studied opera while earning her degree in international finance in 1990. The daughter of a Lithuanian refugee, Ruta was raised in Michigan and now lives resides in Tennessee.

Aric Nesbitt, Class of 2001

Aric Nesbitt is the commissioner of the Michigan Lottery. Previously, he served in the Michigan State Legislature from 2011-2016 as a legislative director and senior policy advisor for two members of the U.S. House of Representatives. He also served as a state coalitions manager for Americans for Tax Reform. In his work as a legislator, Aric focused on energy, tax, and telecommunications policy. Now, as commissioner of the Michigan Lottery, he oversees the overall operations, directs long-term strategy and policy formulation, and works with the state legislature to research and assess lottery-related legislation.

Aric earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Hillsdale College in 2001 before going on to receive a master's degree in economics and business administration from the Norwegian School of Economics in 2005. Aric and his wife live near his family's six-generation farm in Lawton, Michigan.

Jillian Kay Melchior, Class of 2009

Jillian Melchior is an editorial page writer at *The Wall Street Journal*. Previously, she worked as an investigative reporter for *Heat Street* and *National Review*, and was a senior fellow for the Independent Women's Forum, a Tony Blankley fellow for the Steamboat Institute and a Robert Novak fellow. Jillian has covered free speech, higher education, organized labor, corruption, feminist and activist movements, and religious persecution. Her reporting has taken her around the world to Iraq, Ukraine, the Balkans, China, Hong Kong and elsewhere. She has appeared on *Fox News*, *Fox Business*, *MSNBC* and *Real Time with Bill Maher*. Jillian's writing has been featured in *Cosmopolitan*, the *New York Post*, *Newsweek Japan*, *Commentary*, *The Detroit News* and other publications.

At Hillsdale College, Jillian studied political science, completing her bachelor's degree in 2009. A native of Cheyenne, Wyoming, Jillian now resides in New York City.

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College, founded in 1844, has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free

monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 3.7 million. More information is available at hillsdale.edu.

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